

## Reducing Ankle X-rays and lost training time in an Active Duty Clinic

### Why we undertook this Initiative –

Orthopedic injuries are common in our population generating the need for frequent X-ray evaluation of ankles and feet. As a general rule, if a marine injures their ankle in the field they are returned to the clinic for an x-ray. In most cases the corpsman accompanies the injured marine and the training evolution stops.

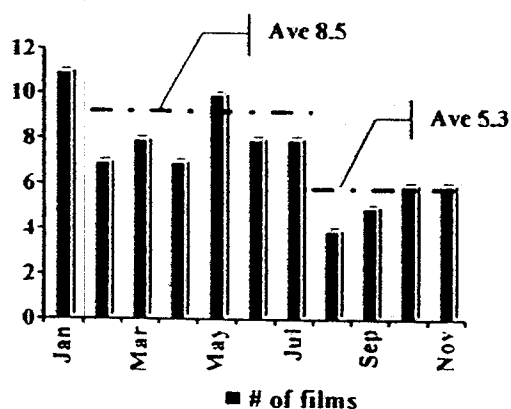
We identified a clinical practice guideline for implementing the Ottawa ankle rules that projects a 48% decrease in the need for ankle and foot x-rays

### What we did –

Clinicians and corpstaff at the Camp Geiger clinic were trained in the Ottawa ankle rules. Reminder cards & an SF600 overlay were provided and corpsman perform the exam in the field during training

### What happened –

We experienced a sustained 37% reduction in the number of ankle x-rays in the Camp Geiger clinic over a 4 month period as a result of this guideline without any missed fractures.



DMED data for Camp Lejeune in FY 99 showed about 1650 active duty visits for ICD9 845 (acute ankle or foot injury). Estimating the value of an X-ray series at \$50, annual savings at our facility, for active duty care alone, is:

	Ankle Injuries	% X-ray	Ankle X-rays	Estimated Savings
Current Practice	1650	100%	1650	None
Pilot Project	1650	63%	1040	\$30,500
Potential	1650	52%	858	\$39,600

By training corpstaff to perform the Ottawa ankle exam in the field, we project a 37-48% decrease in lost training days due to ankle injuries. When several hundred marines can be held for hours if the corpsman has to leave the field during training this represents a significant opportunity cost to the line commander.

### Tips and Lessons Learned –

- A small, demonstrated success can be the trigger to gain buy-in for a larger project.
- Performance gaps can be clinical, cost, utilization of scarce resources, provider or patient satisfaction. Look beyond the obvious – as in reducing lost training time.

### Credit for this initiative goes to –

Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune specifically; LT Annie Wade, MC, LT Pam Stout, NC and CDR Kevin Gallagher, MC

### Resources available for other MTFs –

The Ankle x-ray guideline is included with the Group Health Cooperative guidelines licensed by BUMED for use in some of our facilities. Color-coded reminder cards are included in the guideline. An SF600 overlay is available from Camp Lejeune.

### For Additional Information Contact –

CDR Kevin Gallagher, MC, USN  
Clinical Epidemiologist  
Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune  
910-450-4481  
[kgallagher@lej10.med.navy.mil](mailto:kgallagher@lej10.med.navy.mil)